

Creating an Association of Municipal Finance Officers

Slovakia

Background

Local governments in Slovakia are beginning to become more autonomous of the central government. Consequently, local government officials need to develop knowledge, skills, and professional standards to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. Recognizing the potential for associations to serve these needs, a group of finance officers in Slovakia decided to create a professional association for local government finance officers.

Innovation

The purpose of this association, which was initiated in early spring 1996, is to address emerging issues of importance to local authorities regarding financial management and to provide professional development opportunities for its members. Through lobbying to influence preparation of new national laws and policies, the association will also represent concerns about local finances in a collective manner. The association is expected to evolve into a forum for career development, providing training in financial management, managerial skills, and other related issues. Among the issues that the association is facing is its relationship to other local government institutions. For example, should it affiliate under the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS), which is the municipal association representing most local governments in Slovakia, or should it operate independently? Another issue is whether the association should provide training directly or establish a relationship with a university for this purpose.

Local finance officers have taken the initiative to draft proposed by-laws for an association and have held two exploratory meetings with over 40 interested local finance officials. A major organizational conference was held in September 1996 to present prospective members with the proposed by-laws, program for membership development, financial resource requirements for sustaining such an organization without external funding, and other components of the association's future development program. The membership approved the by-laws, elected officers, and filed the necessary organization documents with the Ministry of Interior. The newly elected officers are currently seeking funding for office space and equipment to assist the new association to begin operations.

Results

The Association of Municipal Finance Officers has been established and will be fully operational by the spring of 1997. The association will provide a collective voice on financial management issues and concerns as well as a growing program of professional opportunities for its membership. Creation of municipal finance officers associations could be replicated in other countries in the region to further municipal finance reform.

Summary

To develop knowledge, skills, and professional standards to carry out their responsibilities more effectively, a group of finance officers in Slovakia decided to create a professional association for local government finance officers. It is expected that the Association of Municipal Finance Officers will be fully operational by the spring of 1997. The association will provide a collective voice on financial management issues and concerns as well as a growing program of professional opportunities for its membership.

For more information contact:

**Eva Balazova, Chief Finance Officer, Lucenec
Tel. 42-863-22-360
Fax 42-863-26-045**